Subject:	SEC News and Praxis UCC in Americus - Ministering to Children through Creative Homeschool Cooperative
From:	Southeast Conference UCC (clwaldron@secucc.org)
To:	michaeltstroud@bellsouth.net;
Date:	Wednesday, October 2, 2013 10:34 AM

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FEATURE FOCUS

Praxis UCC in Americus - Ministering to Children through Creative Homeschool Cooperative
by Cori Lyman-Barner

The Koinonia Home School Cooperative began at historic Koinonia five years ago when three Koinonia Farm Community interns gave leadership to a small group of home schooled students whose families lived and worked at Koinonia and a few who lived locally in Americus and Sumter County. The Cooperative thrived and grew at Koinonia, with the children becoming an important part of the life of this intentional community, participating in daily meals, learning hands-on in the orchards, vineyards, gardens and bakery, and learning from community

members with many stories and diverse experiences.

Koinonia passed the torch of sponsorship to Praxis Americus UCC this summer and the Cooperative moved from the Farm into the small town of Americus. Habitat for Humanity International provides a low-rent building for the group that meets and exceeds the needs of the children. This generosity has allowed the cooperative to continue even through changes in structure and operation.

The majority of the parents in the cooperative work for Habitat, Koinonia, or similar ministries. They are united by the belief that working for the good of others is a worthwhile calling, one worthy of teaching to our children. By sponsoring this home school cooperative, Praxis is able to support these families who live on modest incomes, working to lift people out of poverty here in Sumter County and around the world.

Parents and Praxis members lead activities, teach classes, and mentor students, while simultaneously providing a diverse, top-quality, child-centered learning environment. Four students have graduated from the cooperative and are now full-time students at Georgia Southwestern University, Armstrong Atlantic State University, and Emory University.

At Praxis UCC - Americus, we are delighted to serve our members and the larger community of ministers in this valuable and unique way. The home school cooperative ministry is something that fits well with our congregation and the UCC's historical support of educational programs. We don't have a lot of money to give to the program, but the time and talent we offer helps to make the program a rich experience for the students and empowers their families to continue to be part of important ministries in our community.

CONFERENCE NEWS

Congratulations to Rev. Sarah Kim,
Dean of PATHWAYS for her achievements as a screen writer! Her movie, titled *Heat*,won the first place amongst International Short Film in the Williamsburg Film Festival. The director and the main actors attended the award ceremony on September 22, traveling from Seoul all the way to New York for this event. You can find the trailer for the movie along with other films from the festival by clicking here.

"Grand Grounds" Training for Spiritual Care Providers in Work with Veterans

In order to address the needs of veterans in our community this year's Spiritual Care Grand Rounds at the Atlanta VA Medical Center will focus on *"Healing the Soul after War: How Chaplains and Other Helping Professionals May Be Effective with Today's Veterans and their Family Members."* In concert with the

CELEBRATION

100th Anniversary Celebration of Rush Memorial

On Sunday, September 29, 2013 Rush Memorial Congregational United Church of Christ in Atlanta celebrated "A Century of Faith." The congregation was reminded of the prominent role that Rush Memorial Church has played in its neighborhood and in the Civil Rights Movement in a 3+ hour order of worship, rich music, sharing of memories, presentations, and a stirring message by Dr. Joseph L. Roberts, Jr. (who served for 30 years as the Sr. Minister of the Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.)

Special moments included honoring the two pastors who have served Rush Memorial over the past several decades: **Rev. Lawrence E. Calbert, Sr.** (24 years) and **Rev. Susan Mitchell** (20 years). This worship service was the 6th in a row of special Sundays focusing on 100 years of rich history.

A 7th concluding event will take place at the Atlanta

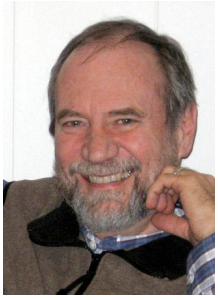
celebration of Spiritual Care Week, chaplains and other spiritual care professionals are encouraged to participate. The training will be led by **Rev. Peter Bauer**, UCC minister, professor, and social worker.

Please save the date and pass the word to all about this tremendous offering to aid us in welcoming and caring for our Veterans and their family members in our respective communities. You can get more information and download flyers for the event by clicking here on the SEC website.

Reflecting on growth in the Southeast Conference and gifts for church planting from the Massachusetts Conference

The successes of the SEC have been possible due to the strength of our connections with others around the UCC. Early in Rev. Dr. Tim Downs' time as Conference Minister the SEC was the recipient of a $150,000 grant for new church development. Tim Downs reflects on that gift and growth throughout the SEC in this article on the Massachusetts Conference website. Thanks to the MACUCC for their dynamic ministries and for continued support and prayer for the work that we are doing here!

ICM Reflections



The Alabama/Tennessee /Mississippi Association held a meeting at Church of the Savior in Knoxville on September 13-14. The agenda proposed a vote on a resolution to dissolve the Association. But before the resolution came to the floor of the meeting for a vote, God's Spirit seemed to prevail - Robert's Rules of Order were suspended to allow general discussion. It was clear that a majority of those present saw the need for change, but the delegates did not feel ready to dissolve the Association. Over and over delegates affirmed their history of congregations and individuals being connected, and affirmed the value of the resulting relationships. What followed was a creative solution: a task force was named to work on imagining a new future. That task force will then present a different resolution for a vote at the next Association meeting. My guess is that it will be a different kind of structure that doesn't rely on elected officers and formal meetings ... but instead it will offer

City Hall. All are invited to come and celebrate work and history of this congregation. Join us in the celebration on **MONDAY, OCTOBER 7, at ATLANTA CITY HALL (55 TRINITY AVE, SW) with a special proclamation service at 12:30 PM and a reception at 1:00 pm. RSVP to Michael Julian Bond at 404-330-6770.**

STILLSPEAKING YOUTH

Save the Date: Winter Youth Retreat

Mark down January 17-20 on your calendars for the annual Winter Youth Retreat at Blowing Rock Conference Center! Each year the retreat brings youth together from across the Southeast and Southern Conferences to explore themes of justice, have fun, and connect on the faith journey. More details will be coming soon. Registration materials can be downloaded by clicking here.

Generosity Corner

OCWM UPDATE

Randy and Debbie sent out OCWM 6 month reports (January 1 to June 30, 2013) to all church pastors last week. One report contains OCWM payments received by each church in the Conference and one report contains both Special Offering payments and OCWM payments from churches. Our Church's Wider Mission for the Conference through June shows payments **slightly ahead of same time last year**. THANK YOU TO ALL CHURCHES who have sent in their quarterly payments. And a reminder for others, please send payments in quarterly OR semi-annually rather than wait until the end of the year.

Need more OCWM payment envelopes? Email Gerri at ghudson@secucc.org

Need copies of the OCWM 6 month reports? Email Debbie at dspearman@secucc.org

"LOVING THE STEWARDSHIP SEASON"

Ruben Swint the Generosity Guy gave a compelling,

a new way of gathering UCC folk in regional settings for fellowship, education, and fun!

I came away from that meeting encouraged by what had evolved and clear about the particular need to find new ways to connect congregations and church leaders within our huge geography, diversity of people and ministries. With this in mind, rather than sharing my current thoughts on theological or social issues (that is, writing something like a blog entry), I want instead to share a mix of "snapshots" of experiences gathered over the past month as I have traveled among you and witnessed a fascinating mix of valued tradition and exciting new models of ministry:

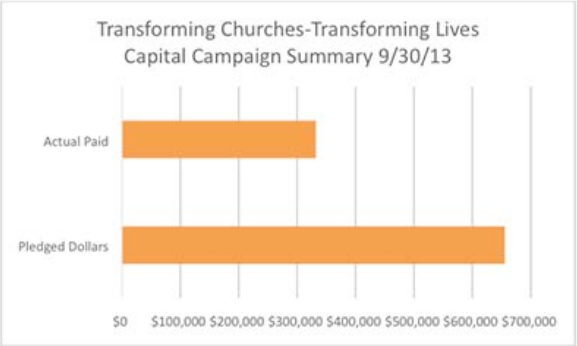
BLOGS - If you want to read some interesting blogs, here are a few I've recently discovered among some of our pastors: Michael Pater (at central-ucc.org); Jeremy Rutledge (his blog is here, the church website is circularchurch.org); Kimberleigh Buchanan (at pilgrimageucc.org); and David Brown (at pilgrim-church.com). As you check these local church websites be sure to look at the numerous other examples of exciting new ministries being carried out by just these four congregations (and we have many more!). And when you are on the Circular website, be sure to look at deep history (dating back to 1681) mixed with the new (their new green building). After wandering through the historic graveyard at Circular Karen and I met with Jeremy and talked about ministry in SECUCC. We talked about the problems of distance and isolation -how are pastors able to be connected. I suggested to Jeremy that he check our Michael Pater's blog - it seemed very similar in form and content to his own, and perhaps they could find ways to link. To my surprise Jeremy said: "I know Michael, we did CPE together! Yes, I need to get in touch with him now that I'm settled in here."

ANOTHER LINK

- We have two new congregations that are experimenting with being linked across some miles: Praxis in Atlanta and Praxis in Americus. Not only do they share names, but as you may recall one of the pastors in Atlanta (Leah Lyman-Waldron) was ordained at the same time as the pastor in Americus (Kirk Lyman-Barner) at Central UCC in Atlanta. Same names for two congregations ... and even similar names for two pastors - although they're not related by blood. Both congregations are working together on web presence, and both have a deep passion for mission. And in the case of Kirk Lyman-Barner, his "day job" is linked with another rich ministry as he serves as the Director of U.S. Field Operations for the

informative Webinar on August 29th to over 25 participants and 10 churches. Please contact Debbie Spearman if you are interested in purchasing copies of the materials. Also Ruben is available to help churches with Stewardship and/or Capital Campaigns. You can visit his webpage at www.generosityguy.com/

THE SOUTHEAST CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE



Please keep this Conference's Campaign in prayer. The dollars raised from this Campaign will be used for the decade to come and the campaign dollars raised are for OUR CHURCHES. Any and all SEC churches will be able to apply for funding in the areas of technology, training, church revitalization and more. See our Campaign Marketing brochure for additional information on how your church might benefit. You can find this brochure and other resources here.

PATHWAYS
Theological Education for a Changing World

PATHWAYS Welcomes New Level 1 Cohort!

Three participants from Southeast Conference, four participants from Iowa Conference, and one participant from Illinois Conference have gathered together on September 26 for an online orientation before embarking on the PATHWAYS journey with their first course-L1.1 Learning and Collaborating Online-starting on October 2, 2013. We are enthused to have them join the PATHWAYS community; they represent delightful and keen spirits who are committed to

Fuller Center (fullercenter.org). I've now worshiped with each of these congregations, and in each the smaller group (gathered in the Central UCC parlor and in Kirk's home) reflected the spirit and vitality of the early Church. Being in Americus evokes other histories as well: Clarence Jordan and Koinonia; Millard Fuller and Habitat for Humanity as well as the Fuller Center; and Jimmy Carter!

ADDITIONAL RICH HISTORY
- after the Knoxville Association meeting (where I also experienced a sense of exciting, welcoming ministry occurring in Church of the Savior), Karen and I traveled on to visit Uplands Retirement Community and Pleasant Hill UCC. There we met a number of friends from past ministries across the UCC; we saw the positive changes taking place at Uplands (e.g., expansion of assisted living and memory care facilities); and we got to experience a unique blend of history with the new. If you check out the new church website (pleasanthillucctn.org) you can meet their new interim pastor (Nayiri Karjian); read about the deep history of Uplands ("Mission Without Boundaries" written by a resident UCC pastor, Ted Braun - among the interesting facts is that ca. 35 residents of Uplands have served in ministries in other countries!); and see their green building renovation.

AND A HISTORY UNIQUE TO THE SOUTH
- As you know, SECUCC has a rich history of ministries and congregations founded by the AMA following the Civil War. I touched on this fact last month when I talked about visiting First Congregational UCC in Atlanta, and since then I've been able to visit our congregations in Thomasville and Savannah. In each place one feels the cloud of witnesses who were leaders in the Civil Rights movement over the years, and at the same time one sees the movement into the future. For example, at First Congregational UCC the pastor, Dwight Andrews, not only leads a vibrant congregation but he also carries its presence out into the world as he shares his gifts in music with the recent Atlanta Music Festival and the upcoming Jazz for the Journey symposium in Cleveland. And after a recent visit to Thomasville to meet their new pastor, James Banks, and two lay leaders, I am planning a return there on October 27 to install James as their new pastor - an installation that won't be the usual UCC installation since James comes out of the AME and is not yet authorized with us. James is also a musician and previously served as the church organist for Bethany UCC in Thomasville!

learning and the life of faith and ministry. This group makes the 3rd learning cohort since the launch of PATHWAYS Theological Education program last year. PATHWAYS is the leadership formation ministry of the Southeast Conference which is open to other conferences seeking alternative paths to equipping leaders for lay and authorized ministry in the UCC. For more info on PATHWAYS, visit: www.tasc21.net

Search Committee

"Happy to Report"

We promised at the onset to keep you informed about the search for our Designated Conference Minister (DCM) to replace Dr. Tim Downs who retired. Many of you also promised to pray with us and for us in this process. Happy to Report: The fruit of our prayers together is evidenced in the energy, efficiency and excitement that characterizes the search thus far. Fifteen (15) persons posted complete applications for the DCM position on the UCC website through the president's office within a 5-week period. We heard your recommendations and concerns across the conference as we visited and shared with congregations in July and August with SEC Board members. We also heard from you at the Annual Meeting, the 2013 General Synod and one-on-one. Know that your suggestions were referenced as the committee developed criteria statements and interview questions. These tools and the interview processes were finalized Sept 22-23. Now the committee prepares to engage the top five candidates for the DCM position. We are each reviewing applications on our own and also collectively as a group with much prayer, thought and care.

If you are already praying with us, thank God for you. DON'T STOP! If you haven't started yet, start now in this time of imagination and opportunity in our conference. Initial phone interviews with the candidates will be conducted between Oct. 22-30. In-person interviews are expected to take place in late November -early December. Stay tuned.

- The Search Committee

National UCC

FINALLY, SOME OTHER EXAMPLES OF MOVING INTO THE FUTURE -
The Center for Progressive Renewal was born here in the SECUCC, and their two co-executive Directors (Cameron Trimble and Michael Piazza) are now doing exciting things on line (including daily blogs they call "Liberating Word") as they help us create a new Church for the future ... and as they work on living out their ideas as co-pastors at our Virginia Highlands congregation. Our own Pathways learning program is doing a similar thing with its focus on lay education. And Decatur UCC is now streaming live its worship service (check this out at Livestream.com/decaturucc

for a sample of Glenna Shepherd with her colleagues and warm congregation in worship.)

Well, those are my snapshots for now. I know that there are many more to visit and experience in the coming days, and I celebrate the many ways that God is Still Speaking in our midst!

-- Shalom, Randy

Bill McKibben Mentions UCC Commitment to the Environment in NPR Interview

The UCC stance on the environment was mentioned in an NPR segment with Bill McKibben as he is interviewed for his new book, *Oil and Honey.* You can read or listen to the segment by clicking here.

Call for Help - Disaster Recovery Work Still Needed in New Jersey

UCC Disaster Relief Ministries is putting out the call for recovery mission groups to continue the response to Hurricane Sandy. Groups are needed now and for the next year in Bergen County, NJ to rebuild homes. Sandy left the towns of Moonachie and Little Ferry under several feet of salt water for days after a 9-foot ocean surge overflowed the Hackensack River. Almost all of the small homes in this area were damaged and residents were traumatized.

Local organizations responded immediately to help support these communities. Projects are ongoing to repair homes in this area. However, most of the media focus is on the Jersey shore. Almost a year after Sandy hit and the small inland area of Northern New Jersey is being overlooked. Would your church be interested in helping with the recovery efforts? You can get more information and by visiting the UCC website here.

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